

WHY THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN

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“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.”
2 Corinthians 4:3

IN this verse and the following one we have a very brief yet very full description of what every minister of the Gospel ought to preach. In the first place, he is to preach *the Gospel*—not metaphysics, not politics, not mere morality, not simply doctrines as such. He is to preach the Gospel, which signifies good news, something new, and something good, so good that nothing else can equal it—the glad tidings of mercy for the guilty, the blessed tidings of God coming down to man that man may go up to God, the welcome tidings of atonement made for human guilt. It is also new as well as good, it comes as a strange novelty to the attentive ear. Mythology never dreamed it, human wit could never have invented it, even angelic intellect could not have devised a scheme—

“So just to God, so safe for man.”

The business of the Christian minister is to preach this good news, to publish to sinners the glad tidings that there is a Savior, to point the guilty to Christ, and to be constantly saying to each individual sinner, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I care not what may be the learning or eloquence of the minister, though he may speak with the tongue of men and angles, if he does not preach Christ, and bid sinners trust in Him, he has mistaken his mission, and missed the grand object for which he was sent.

This Gospel is called in the text “*our gospel*.” By this expression I understand that the minister must accept it for himself before he can hold it out to others. I am myself to look to Jesus as my own personal Savior, and then I am to cry to others, “Look unto him, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” I must be able to say—

*“I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;”—*

and then, but not till then, I am to cry, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” What a miserable wretch must he be who preaches to others a Gospel in which he has himself no share! He spreads the table, and invites others to come to the feast, while he himself is starving. He is like a plague-stricken physician who knows the remedy for the disease, and sees others cured by it, yet dies with the remedy in his hand. Ah, me! of all the portions that must be most dreadful in the world to come, as well as most uncomfortable in this present life, surely it must be the portion of the man who preaches to others what he has never experienced in his own soul.

Paul might well call it “our Gospel,” for it had saved him, the chief of sinners, and made him a beloved apostle of Jesus Christ. He might well call it “our Gospel” for he had held it fast in time of persecution, and amid all the perils to which he had been exposed, and he was at last to give his life as a sacrifice for it, and it must be “our Gospel” too, “to have and to hold,” or else we cannot preach it with any power.

In the verse following our text, something more is said about the Gospel, it is there called “*the glorious gospel*.” There was something in it that aroused and inflamed the apostle’s noblest thoughts. Paul was no boaster. “God forbid that I should glory,” said he, but there was one exception, “save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He did not stand up as a mere apologist for the Gospel, or say, “I can defend it against all comers, and maintain that it is reasonable,” but he gloried in it as the best and highest truth, as wiser than all the Stoic’s, wisdom, and more full of joy than all the Epicurean’s pleasure.

He gloried in that Gospel which brings full and free forgiveness to the penitent, that Gospel which takes the meanest and basest of mankind, and makes them princes in the court of the King of kings, that Gospel which comes to men in poverty, in slavery, in the degradation of superstition, idolatry, and crime, and lifts them up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, sets their feet upon the Rock of ages, cleanses them, clothes them, puts a new song into their mouth, preserves them from falling, and at last brings them where they shall see the face of God, and dwell forever in His presence.

It is indeed a glorious Gospel which can do all this, yet, alas! the most of men are like the cock on the dunghill, who, when he found a pearl, said that he would sooner have found a grain of barley, they think more of their corn and their wine, their feasts and their mirth, than they do of the inexpressibly glorious things of the kingdom of heaven. Oh, that they were wise enough to perceive the glories of this glorious Gospel!

Paul further calls it “*the glorious gospel of Christ*.” And well he might, for it is all about Christ from beginning to end. Give me a true preacher of the glorious Gospel of Christ, and I will gladly listen to him. I would like him to be an educated minister if that is possible, for there is no need for my ear to be tortured by mistakes in grammar, but I do not care so much about that as about the other matter. I would sooner hear Christ’s Gospel preached ungrammatically than I would hear the best philosophy set forth in the most orderly sentences, but with the Gospel of Christ left out.

When the table is spread for dinner, it is well to have a clean damask cloth, and the china, and glass, and cutlery all of the right sort and in their proper places, but if there is no food on the dishes, all those other things are a mere mockery to the hungry ones who are waiting to be fed. Sooner by far would I go to a bare table, and eat from a wooden porringer something that would appease my appetite, than I would go to a well-spread table on which there was nothing to eat.

Yes, it is Christ, Christ, Christ whom we have to preach, and if we leave Him out, we leave out the very soul of the Gospel. Christless sermons make merriment for hell. Christless preachers, Christless Sunday school teachers, Christless class leaders, Christless tract distributors—what are all these doing? They are simply setting the mill to grind without putting any grist into the hopper, so all their labor is in vain. If you leave Jesus Christ out, you are simply beating the air, or going to war without any weapon with which you can smite the foe.

Dear friend, if thou art unconverted, let me pause here for a few moments to remind thee that this is not a Gospel of self, nor a Gospel of works, nor a Gospel of baptism, nor a Gospel of priests, nor a Gospel of ministers, but it is “*the glorious gospel of Christ*.” Forget the men who preach it if thou wilt, but oh! forget not the bleeding, dying Savior to whom they bid thee look. Thy hope must be in Him, and in Him alone. To Him would we affectionately point thee, and we pray the Holy Spirit to shut thine eyes to everything but Him whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin.

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner—look unto Him, and be saved—
Unto Him who was nail’d to the tree.*

*“It is not thy tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul:
On Him, then, who shed it believing at once*

Thy weight of iniquities roll.

*“We are heal’d by His stripes—wouldst thou add to the word?
And He is our righteousness made:
The best robe of heaven He bids thee put on:
Oh! couldst thou be better array’d ?*

*“Then doubt not thy welcome, since God has declared
There remaineth no more to be done;
That once in the end of the world He appeared;
And completed the work He begun.”*

With this rather long introduction, I now come to the three points upon which I am going to speak briefly, but very solemnly, for I think they concern many of you who are here tonight. So, firstly, I ask, *why is this Gospel hidden from some people?* Secondly, *what is the state of those from whom it is hidden?* And thirdly, *what is to be feared concerning them in the future?*

I. First, then, WHY IS THIS GOSPEL HIDDEN FROM SOME PEOPLE?

It is evident that there are some persons in the world who do not understand the Gospel, and I will venture to say that *the Gospel is never understood until it is received*. You might have thought that men could very readily understand anything so simple as “Believe, and live,” yet those of us who have been converted must confess that we did not understand the Gospel until we received it. I am sure that I never fully comprehended the plan of salvation until I did believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and when I did believe, the whole matter seemed so simple that I wondered why I had not understood it before.

You notice that the apostle declares that it was not his fault that the Gospel was hidden from some people, and although we would not put ourselves on a level with any apostle, we are as clear upon this point of plain speaking as any apostle who ever lived. If “our gospel” be hidden from any of our hearers, it is not because of the fine language that we use. We do fear that there are some who, in preaching the Gospel, indulge in such eloquent oratory that their Gospel is hidden from their hearers, but this is not a sin which can be laid at our door.

We use what Whitefield called “market language.” We use a great many more Saxon words than Latin words. If we had to find out the Gospel through the types and symbols of the law, we might have a difficulty in understanding it, but the Gospel we have to preach is simply this, “‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ Trust in Him as suffering as a Substitute in thy stead, and thou shalt be saved.”

Can anything be more simple than that? We try to use the plainest similitudes so as to bring the truth within the comprehension of the weakest of our hearers, we make it a matter of conscience, as in the sight of God, to speak to men very simply so that each one, after he has heard the message, is compelled to admit that it has been delivered to him very plainly. How is it, then, that you do not understand it?

Certainly, *it is not because we hide the Gospel in a long roll of ceremonies*. We have never said to you, “You must be christened in your infancy, you must have sponsors to promise all sorts of things in your name, and then, as you grow up, you must be confirmed, and must take the responsibility upon yourselves.” Oh, no, we have never talked like that, we point you to the divinely inspired Bible, and tell you that all you need to know is plainly recorded there, we point you to the Eternal Word who became incarnate, and we say, with all the emphasis of which we are capable—

*“None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

We bid you not to trust in forms and ceremonies, but to look alone to Jesus Christ and Him crucified, so that it cannot be for want of plainness that the Gospel is not understood.

And again, *it cannot be because of any obscurity in the Gospel itself*. I will venture to say that there is no proposition in the world more simple than the one which the Gospel sets before us. The formula, "Twice two are four," is so simple that a child's mind can understand it, and the degree of intellect which can comprehend that is sufficient—so far a intellect is concerned—to comprehend Paul's declaration, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," or John's, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." To trust Jesus Christ, so far as it is an intellectual act, is a matter that does not require the slightest education, there is no need to sit down, and calculate.

Here is Jesus Christ standing in the sinner's stead, God punished the sinner's guilt upon Christ instead of upon the sinner, all that the sinner is bidden to do is to trust Christ to save him, and as soon as he does that, he is saved. What could be simpler than that? I grant you that, as the Gospel is sometimes preached, there is obscurity in it, but there is no obscurity in the Gospel itself. Well then, if it so, and it is, why is it that the Gospel is hidden from some people? And the answer is, that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Let us see how this is.

First of all, *the Gospel is hidden from some men because they have never felt sin to be an evil*. "Why," say they, "do you talk to us about the punishment of sin? Why do you tell us that God punished His own Son in the place of sinners? We believe in the universal fatherhood of God, so we have no need of any doctrine of substitution." So you think that it is a small thing to offend the Most High God, but He thinks it is a very great thing. You consider that sin is a mere trifle, scarcely worth thinking about, but God regards it as exceeding sinful, an evil and an accursed thing which He will by no means pardon except in those who trust His Son, the divinely appointed Substitute and Savior.

If you realized what sin is, you would soon understand the Gospel. If the Holy Spirit shall teach you that sin is the most deadly and most damnable thing of which you can conceive, you will at once understand the glory of the Gospel that shows how you can be completely delivered from its curse, and penalty, and power through the mercy of God in giving His only-begotten Son to die in your room, and place, and stead.

You love sin—that is the fact of the matter—and you suppose that sin is no more offensive to God than it is to yourself. Fool that thou art, thou art fascinated by the serpent that has filled thy veins with the venom which shall burn in thee for ever and ever unless thou shalt look by faith to Him who was lifted up upon the cross even as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness that all who looked upon it might live. May God give thee grace to see sin as it really is in His sight, for then wilt thou realize thy need of a Savior, and thou wilt give heed to the Gospel which bids thee believe in Him that thou mayest be saved.

Another reason why men do not understand the Gospel is that *they do not understand themselves*. Some of you who are here tonight think that you can save yourselves. I know what your thoughts are, they are to this effect—that, if you do your best, if you say your prayers, if you attend church or chapel, if you give alms to the poor, then you will go to heaven. You have not yet learned that all you do is tainted with the leprosy of sin, and therefore cannot be acceptable to God. Your best works are bad since you do them with the motive that you may be saved by them, selfishness, therefore, is at the bottom of them all.

You are not serving God by your good works, you are all the while trying to serve yourselves. If you knew yourselves better, you would know that all your works are nothing but sin until the Holy Spirit brings you to know your need of Christ, and then to know Christ as the very Savior you need. If I am not in want, I have no need of the gifts of charity, and if you do not know how needy you are spiritually, you will never apply to Christ for aid. But once let the real needs of your soul stare you in the face, that you realize that you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," then the simple Gospel message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," will be so welcome to your soul that it will almost leap out of your body to lay hold of it.

Yet another reason why men do not understand the Gospel is *because their will is unsubdued*. “We want to know,” say they, “why the requirements of the Gospel are so strict.” Oh, sirs, that is not the language for you to use to your God!” The message to you is, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” That hectoring spirit, which says, “Why is this the only way of salvation? Wherefore is this precept enjoined? Who is the Lord that we should serve him?”—that spirit has been the eternal ruin of many. There is no likelihood that you will ever understand the Gospel while you are this humor.

Come down, man, come down, there is no blessing for thee whilst thou setteth thyself up high. May the Lord make thee know the corruptions and abominations which dwell in thy heart that, in the presence of the thrice-holy God thou mayest demean thyself after another and a humbler fashion! But while that wicked will of thine says, “I will not do what God requires,” there is no hope whatever that thou wilt be able to understand the Gospel.

There are some who cannot understand the Gospel *because it interferes with their worldly interests*. If you take a sovereign out of your pocket and cover the word “God” in your Bible with it, of course you cannot see the word. There are a great many men who never seem to see anything beyond pounds, shillings, and pence, they never look above their ledgers, they never rise to anything that is Godlike and divine, they have no more spirituality than so many pigs at a trough. They say they cannot understand the Gospel, but how can they when their understanding has been eaten through and through with the canker of their gold?

There are many here to whom I am a stranger, but I should like to put this question to any of you who do not understand the Gospel—Is there not in your hearts a desire not to understand it? Is it not a sorrowful fact that many of you do not comprehend Gospel preachers because you do not want to trouble yourselves by comprehending them? You have an uneasy consciousness that Gospel truth and your pleasures will not agree. You are like men who are on the way to bankruptcy, but who dare not examine their books to see how they stand, yet did you ever know a man retrieve his position by refusing to look his difficulties in the face? Is it not the most sensible plan to know the worst of your case, and to know it at once?

I have known some who did not want to understand the Gospel because they were engaged in a business which would not bear examination. There are others who are hindered by their besetting sins. If the Lord Jesus Christ would grant pardons, and yet allow men to keep their sins, what a host of disciples of that sort He might have! But He says that, though sin is as dear to us as our right arm, it is to be cut off, and though it is as precious as our right eye, it is to be plucked out, yet many will not agree to these conditions, and therefore the Gospel is hidden from them.

II. Now I must try very briefly to answer the second question, WHAT IS THE STATE OF THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN?

Paul says that *they are lost*, “If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” But Paul, are you not very uncharitable in saying that men are lost? Preachers nowadays tell them that they will all get to heaven at last. Ah, beloved, the apostles knew nothing of this modern, maudlin “charity.” They said, as their Master said before them, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that there was no alternative between believing and being lost. But in what sense are they lost from whom the Gospel is hidden?

Well, first, *they are lost to the church*. You may be a subscriber to the funds of the church, you may attend the service of the church, you may even be an ardent admirer of the preacher, and find a certain measure of interest in listening to his discourses, but if the Gospel is still hidden from you, if you do not understand it, and believe on the Christ of whom it speaks, you are lost to the church of which many around you are members, and if you remain as you are, you will be lost to the one great church of the firstborn, and will never form a part of the general assembly of the redeemed around the throne of God above.

It is a dreadful thing for anyone to be lost, I do not know if there is a more dreadful word in the English language than that word “lost.” Do you recollect, my friend, when you came home from work one night, and your wife met you with the sad news that your little Mary was lost, how you hurried from one police station to another, and your poor distracted wife went tearing up and down one street after another seeking for tidings of your lost child? It was her misfortune to be lost in that sense, but I hope you may never have a child lost in a sense in which it shall be her crime, when the mother night after night searches the cold streets for any trace of her poor lost daughter.

Ah, sinner, *you are lost to God in that sense*. You have turned away from Him who made you, you have despised the love that He has lavished upon you, you have forgotten all the care that He has taken of you. I am quite sure that you are not happy while you are thus lost, how can you be happy? You are not at rest, your soul is like a ship drifting in a storm, and with neither a rudder to guide her nor an anchor to hold her, and unless the Lord shall mercifully interpose to save you, you will be lost forever.

What a mercy it is, sinner, that you are not yet “lost” in the full meaning of that term, as you soon must be if you do not repent of sin and turn unto the Lord! But it is a terrible thing to be lost in any sense even now, and if you are not saved, you are lost, you must be either the one or the other, you cannot be partly saved and partly lost. I will ask every one of you again tonight to do what I asked my congregation once before to do, you are either lost or saved, so will you definitely decide which word applies to your case, and write it down, and sign your name to it?

I remember that, on the previous occasion when I made this request, there was one brother who, after sincere heart searching, felt that he was lost, so he wrote down that word, and signed his name below it. When he had done so, and looked at the word “Lost” written with his own hand, and with his signature appended to it, and felt that it might be brought forward as evidence against him at the last great day, it broke the heart that had never been broken before, and brought him as a true penitent to the Savior’s feet, so that before that night passed away he could write himself down as “Saved” just as truthfully as he had before acknowledged that he was lost.

I pray that this brother’s experience may be repeated in many of you here. Do not hesitate to look thoroughly into your own case, if you are saved, it is not difficult for you to know that you are, and if you are not saved, it is well that you should know it at once. If you think you are saved when you are not, your ruin will be all the more terrible because you had not the courage to find out the truth. If there is any doubt about the matter, let it be cleared up at once. Go to Jesus Christ this very moment, confess your sin to Him, and trust to His precious blood to wash it all away, and then you shall be no longer lost, but shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

III. Now, in a few closing sentences, let me answer the third question, WHAT IS TO BE FEARED CONCERNING THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN?

It is to be feared that, in addition to their natural blindness, a second film has been cast over their eyes by “the god of this world.” That is a very remarkable expression, “the god of this world.” Does this world, then, really worship the devil? There are devil-worshippers in certain far off lands, and we hold up our hands in horror, and say, “What shockingly bad people!” Yet there are many devil-worshippers in this land also. The lover of pleasure—what is he better than a devil-worshipper? It is the devil in his best suit of clothes whom some people worship, but it is the devil.

Some worship the devil with the golden hoofs, but it is the same devil all the while. If I were to be lost, it would make little difference to me whether I was lost in a gold mine or in a coal mine. I were to break my neck on a slab of gold, it would be no better for me than breaking it upon a slab of stone. So, if you are lost, you will find little comfort in the thought that you are lost in a more respectable way than others are.

When “the god of this world” comes to a man who is already blind by nature, he seeks to “make assurance doubly sure” by bandaging his eyes so securely that the light of the Gospel shall be still more completely hidden from him. If such a man attends a place of worship, the devil persuades him that he is not a sinner, so that he need not take to himself the preacher’s warnings and exhortations. Another says,

“I don’t intend to trouble about any of these things, my one aim is to get on in the world.” Yes, just so, “the god of this world” has blinded his eyes. So effectually does Satan blind the man that he cannot see his own depravity.

O soul, what shall it profit thee if thou shalt gain the whole world, and yet be lost forever? What if thou shalt die upon a bed of down, and wake up among the lost in hell? May God give all of us the grace to look upon the two worlds in their proper light! If the next world is only a trifle, trifle with it. If His world is everything, make everything of it. As you possess an immortal spirit, think well where that spirit is to spend eternity. As all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, you are a sinner, and you need salvation, so do, I entreat you, trust in Him who alone can save the guilty, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” but the name of Jesus, and he is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

I said just now that I do entreat you to trust in Him, and so I do, yet this is not half so much my business as it is yours. The preacher of the Gospel ought to be in earnest, but when he has faithfully delivered his message, the responsibility is transferred to his hearers. As the Lord liveth, I will take no responsibility of yours upon myself, to our own Master you and I must stand or fall, but as your fellow man, as one who devoutly desires that you should not be lost, I do beseech you to seek from God grace to get rid of the scales from your eyes so that you may see sin, and salvation, and everything else as they are in His sight, and may look to Jesus, and find eternal life in Him.

Some of you young men are perhaps going to Oxford or Cambridge. Well, study hard, be senior wranglers if you can, but with all the knowledge that you may acquire, do get a clear understanding of eternal things, and seek the wisdom that cometh from above. When you wear the degrees which earthly knowledge will procure for you, may you also wear the higher degree which God shall confer upon you as the children of the kingdom, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus!

Sit at the feet of divines and philosophers if you will, but do also sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him, for so shall you have honor and glory that shall last forever. Do seek after the honor which cometh from God, which can only be found by believing in Jesus, and seeking to please Him in all things. My time has gone, and your time for repentance and faith is almost gone. May the realities of eternity be deeply impressed upon us all, and may we be prepared, when death shall summon us to stand before God, to prove that the Gospel was not hidden from us, that so we may not be among “them that are lost.” May God save us, by His grace, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 CORINTHIANS 4 AND 5:1-9

Chapter 4. Verses 1-2. *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.*

Paul’s description of his own ministry and that of Timothy also should be true of every servant of Jesus Christ. There must be no dishonesty, or craftiness, or deceit about the minister of the Word, and it is by the manifestation of the truth that he must commend himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. He may not win every man’s approval, yet even those who differ from him must perceive his loyalty to his Lord.

3-4. *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* [See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1663, “The True Gospel No Hidden Gospel,” and No. 2304, “Blinded by Satan”].

The light of the Gospel is so glorious and bright that it is only hidden from those who have been blinded by Satan, “the god of this world.” The only hope for them is to believe in Jesus who can give sight to the spiritually blind as easily as he gave sight to the physically blind when He was here in the flesh.

5. *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.*

“Christ Jesus the Lord” is to be the great theme of our preaching, and when it is so, we naturally take our right position with regard to our hearers, as Paul and Timothy did, “and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

6-7. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

God might have put the priceless treasure of the Gospel into the golden vessel of cherubim and seraphim, and He might have sent angels, who would never suffer, who would never err, who would never sin, to preach the Word, but instead of doing so, He has chosen to send the Gospel to men by commonplace beings like themselves. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” and this redoundeth much to God’s glory, and dear friends, the great object of the sending of the Gospel into the world is the glory of God. He would manifest His mercy to men that His mercy might be glorified, and therefore He has committed the Gospel, not to the trust of perfect men, but to the trust of poor, shallow, earthen vessels like ourselves.

8-9. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

The apostle is here speaking for himself and all the members of the apostolic college, and also for all the early saints. They appear to have been very much troubled, and sometimes to have been very much perplexed. I meet with certain brethren, now and then, who have no troubles, they are so supremely wise that they are never perplexed, and so eminently holy that they do not appear to belong to the ordinary democracy of Christianity, but are altogether supernatural beings.

Well, I do not belong to their clique, and it does not seem to me that Paul and the apostles and the early Christians did. Those great pioneers of the church of Christ were men who were troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, in fact, they were men of like passions with ourselves.

10-11. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

So you see, brethren, to have an anticipation of death upon one is no hindrance to one’s work, but a great help to it, to bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus is a great help towards the manifestation of the life of Christ. When we begin to reckon that we shall live long, we are very apt to live loosely. To live as though tomorrow might be the judgment day, or as though today the King might come in His glory, that is the style of living which is the best of all. “A short life and a holy one,”—lengthened as God may please, but reckoned by us as short even at the longest—be that the Christian’s motto. As the worldling says, “A short life and a merry one,” we say, “A short life if God so wills it, but a holy one whether it be long or short.”

12. *So then death worketh in us, but life in you.*

These apostolic men lived as it were on the borders of the grave—lived expecting to die a cruel death, and in this way spiritual life was brought to the Corinthians and others who witnessed their holy lives and heroic deaths.

13-16. *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the*

abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

As the flesh goes down, so, by God's grace, the spirit goes up. You know that there are heavy weights that keep men down to the earth, but he who understands mechanics knows that by the use of wheels and pulleys those same heavy weights may be made to lift a man, and God often makes the weights and burdens associated with bodily decay lift up the inward spirit.

17-18. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Chapter 5. Verses 1-2. *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan,—*

In this poor body it is our lot often to groan, but the groan is a hopeful one, for it is a birth-pang, and it will bring joy in due time, “For in this we groan,”—

2-6. *Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident,—*

That is a blessed experience, “always confident.” There are some Christians who are never confident, and some who are afraid of being confident. I know some who, if they see this holy confidence in other Christians, begin to tremble for their eternal safety. Never mind about them, brother, if God gives you a holy confidence in Him, hold fast to it, and do not let it go whatever anyone may say.

6-9. *Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.* [See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1303, “The Believer in the Body and out of the Body”].

That is our main business, whether we live or whether we die is of no consequence at all, but to be accepted of Christ, so to live is to be well pleasing to God. Be this our heavenly ambition, and may the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to attain to it!

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.